
The Catalyst



The Newsletter for Interpretation in California State Parks

Spring 2003

Volume 6 No. 4



New Volunteer Items

A limited number of newly redesigned Volunteer and Host caps and visors are now available for deserving volunteers. They are khaki-colored with the department logo (but don't throw away those highly collectible brown & gold ones yet!). You may request the new caps and visors through your District Volunteer Coordinator.

Four different types are now available:

- Volunteer cap
- Volunteer visor
- HOST cap
- HOST visor

Supplies are limited. But if districts want to order (and pay for) their own, the company is Safe Designs. Our contact is lindataylor@safedesigns.com.

Ranger on Letterman Show

Did you see this "interpretive moment" on late night television? State Park Ranger Mike Bradeen of Palomar Mountain State Park appeared on the Dave Letterman Show in late February. For those of you who went to bed early that night, we have the moment here. If you make a little gargling noise you'll have the soundtrack, too. Yes, that's right, they had everyone gargling with Palomar Mountain Spring Water. Oh well, at least he had his stetson on!





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Contributor's Guidelines

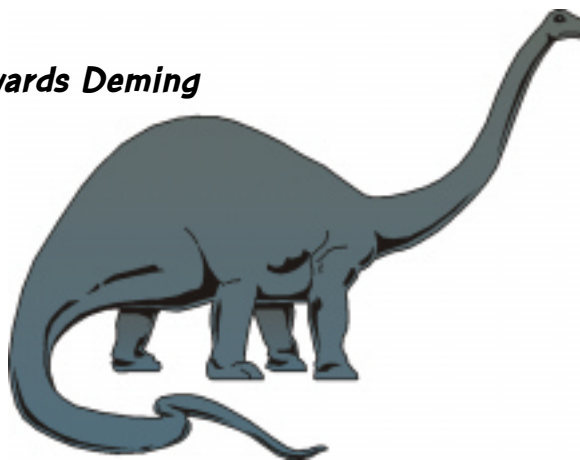
The Catalyst welcomes your original articles of any length! Or, send copies of stories published elsewhere that you think our readers will appreciate. Be sure to include information about the publication so we can get permission to use the material. You may submit an article at any time.

We **really** appreciate articles submitted on disk or by e-mail. We can read most formats of DOS/Windows disks. Printed manuscripts, facsimile or phone messages are also accepted. Please advise if you would like your diskette returned, otherwise we will recycle it in our office to save postage.

Illustrations are strongly encouraged. Drawings, graphs or other illustrations may be submitted on disk or hard copy. Black & white glossy photos are preferred; color prints or slides are usually acceptable. All photos and artwork submitted will be returned promptly.

"It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory."

—W. Edwards Deming



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From the Editor

Each spring is a season of new promise, and that is especially true this year. We hope each of you have survived the winter (and the departmental reorganization) and are ready to interpret the nation's finest state park system to our spring visitors.



Just turn this page for a batch of fresh interpretive resources and training opportunities. And you will find the Master Interpreter presiding on page 4 as usual, offering gratuitous advice to the interpretively challenged.

If you are ready for a little "chicken soup," you will enjoy the piece by Sally Fohse on page 6. Sally is with the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation which operates El Presidio State Historic Park. Her story is about a volunteer at a museum in Fresno. It was recently published in "Chicken Soup for the Volunteer's Soul." Since interpreters often work closely with volunteers we are pleased to feature this piece.

Page 8 describes an outdoor exhibit improvement project at MacKerricher State Park. Rouvaishyana, a State Park Interpreter Assistant there, describes the project. He can be contacted at r@mcn.org

On page 9 Mary Helmich tells us all about the department's new Heritage Adventures brochures. You can reach Mary at (916) 653-3913.

Page 10 announces the completion of the latest phase of the Park Map and Brochure program. Fourteen new brochures are nearing completion, perhaps one coming to a park near you. Pat McLatchey in the Interpretive Publications section brought us this update. She can be reached at pmcla@parks.ca.gov.

Our new online partnership with California schools is featured on page 11. Joe von Herrmann coordinates this program, and he would love to hear from you at JVONH@parks.ca.gov.

Page 12 brings a fun piece that many of you that work information counters will be able to relate to. Written by Karen Westcamp-Johnson, it comes all the way from a state park in Arkansas. This item also appeared in the Visions, the NAI Region VI newsletter and is reprinted here with permission.

On page 14, I am pleased to present "Slow Down! We Move Too Fast." This piece comes to us from Karen Shragg who is an interpreter in Minnesota. This item also appeared in the Buffalo Bull, the NAI Region V newsletter and is reprinted here with permission. Karen can be reached at kShragg@ci.richfield.mn.us. And page 15 presents a different way of looking at California History.

It is time to start thinking about attending the National Interpreter's Workshop in Reno next year. Perhaps you should go? Page 16 provides a few tips to help you get there.

Page 18 brings a Timely Reminder from one of my favorite authors, Ed Abbey. And, you will find a special treat hidden way back on page 19. "Lighthouses" by Ted Cable, PhD. You may be familiar with him as the author of "Interpretation for the 21st Century." This item also appeared in Visions, the NAI Region VI newsletter. It is reprinted here with permission.

On page 20 you will find a piece by Jamie Mendez, part of her ongoing series, "The Road Less Traveled." Jamie is a Guide I at Hearst Castle;® you can email her at taquish@att.net.

And you'll find another installment of "California's Tapestry," back in its usual place.

Thanks to each of you for reading *Catalyst*! And special thanks for your comments and suggestions. We always appreciate hearing from our readers. 🐾



Brian Cahill, Editor

What's Up?



Interpreters' Resources

AAM Meeting

The annual meeting of the American Association of Museums as well as MuseumExpo 2003 will be held May 18-22 in Portland OR. With a theme of "Bridges to the World," this is billed as the most comprehensive meeting for museum professionals. See: www.aam-us.org/am03/

NIW 2003

National Interpreter's Workshop, November 11-15, 2003, John Ascuaga's Nugget, Sparks, Nevada. See: www.interpnet.com. Keep



checking, updates will be posted there as soon as they are available. Early registration will be \$315. California State Parks is a workshop cosponsor.

WRIST

Western Regional Interpretive Skills Training, June 1-6, 2003, Colorado Springs, CO. WRIST is in its twelfth year of providing quality training to interpreters from all over the United States. This year's theme is **"Every resource needs a good spokesperson."** Sponsored by the National Association for Interpretation and Colorado State Parks, this workshop puts you with some of the best interpretive trainers in the world in the dramatic ponderosa pine woods of the Black Forest area of Colorado. Cost \$200 - \$500 including meals & lodging depending on options selected. See: www.interpnet.com

Sea to Summit - Water Video

The "From Sea to Summit" video traces the entire hydrological cycle, using a mix of computer generated graphics and filmed footage to illustrate the process as water falls to earth in the form of precipitation, before filtering down through watersheds into urban and agricultural areas and finally flows out to sea, where it is eventually evaporated into the atmosphere to start the entire process over again. Produced by the Surfrider Foundation, \$16. See: <https://ssl-020.vianetworks.net/beachinfo/store/video.asp>

Ranger Rick Online

Visit the online interactive version of Ranger Rick from the National Wildlife Federation. Find games, online tours, a reader's corner and ideas for outdoor fun. See: <http://nwf.org/kids>

Trail Surprises

When you are on the trail with little ones, do they want to run ahead? Perhaps you should keep a feather or snake skin in your pocket. When they get ahead, drop an item on the trail and call them back to see what they "missed" by running ahead.

Recycle Cell Phones

Don't send that old phone to the dump! It can actually be refurbished and sold in a third world country. You can take a tax deduction by donating it to Keep California Beautiful. For information call them at (800) CLEAN CA.

Handling Deadlines Book

Could you use a little help with deadlines? Check out Dan Carrison's new book "Deadline! How Premier Organizations Win the Race Against Time." This is not just fluff like "develop good time-management skills" but a well-written book full of detailed, specific advice. \$24.95 from your favorite bookseller.

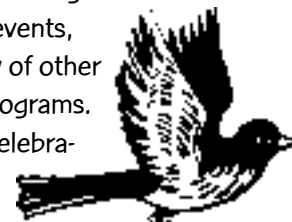
DFG on the Web

California's fishing and hunting regulations are now just a click away on the Department of Fish and Game's new interactive Web pages. Sport anglers planning a trip to go ocean fishing can now go to DFG's Web site at www.dfg.ca.gov/mrd/fishing_map.html and easily download fishing regulations for specific regions along the coast.

Migratory Bird Day

International Migratory Bird Day celebrates the incredible journeys of migratory birds between their breeding grounds in North America and their wintering grounds in Mexico, Central, and South America. The event, which takes place on the second Saturday in May each year, encourages bird conservation and increases awareness of birds through hikes, bird watching, information about birds and migration, public events, and a variety of other education programs. Join in the celebration!

See: www.birdday.org



Dear Master Interpreter

Dear Master Interpreter,

I am putting together a little self-guided trail brochure for our park and my co-workers are driving me nuts! I tried to solicit their opinions when I was doing the writing and editing and they had very little to offer. But now that the design is nearly finished they are full of ideas on how to change things. They believe that anything done on a computer is easy to change. I am an old-fashioned type that believes writing and editing should be done before the piece is designed, not after. What do you say?

Going Nuts

Dear Nuts,

I'm with you, it is important to do the writing and editing first before you move into the design phase. But some people are better editors than authors, they need something tangible to respond too. So I try to circulate layout concepts early in the project. All I can suggest for next time is that you keep your expectations clear about when you need to receive their input. I also try to be clear in communicating what input is needed at each review point (e.g. Please review for content accuracy only. Format was finalized following last review.) If they think it is easy to fit one extra sentence into a finished piece, they don't know much about design.

MI

**Dear Master Interpreter,**

I've been around parks for a long time, but working with volunteers is new to me. The volunteers allow us to do some things that we might not otherwise be able to do, but my problem is that every volunteer has at least one good idea that he is absolutely convinced the park should be doing. Some have hundreds of ideas for me. How can we get these volunteers to understand that we are not lacking for good ideas, but what we really need is help getting done some of the good ideas we already have.

Idea Man

Dear Idea Man,

You won't want to hear this, but you will never win that one. Volunteers are driven to share their good ideas with you. For many of them that is a key reason they are volunteering. Your best bet is to set up some sort of system to consider these ideas. Perhaps a suggestion box or a team that reviews these ideas and prioritizes them for consideration might help. If they feel like they are being heard, then maybe they will be able to focus on the work you need to have them do today.

MI

Dear Master Interpreter,

Sorry I sent you a computer virus. . .
Buggy

Dear Buggy,

I know you really did not send this to me for publication, but perhaps others can learn from your recent experience. Someone sent you a message apologizing for possibly sending you a computer virus and the message included instructions for fixing the "problem." The instructions also urged you to immediately send the message to everyone in your address book to stop the spread of this terrible virus. Which of course you did, when you sent it to me. As it turns out, you were taken in by a hoax. Hopefully you have learned to be suspicious of any message that urges you to send it immediately to everyone you know. There are places on the web you can check these things out before you send them on. There are a whole lot of these hoax messages spreading around. We all need to stop and think before we hit send.

MI



The Role of Volunteers

Bless Every Evelyn!

**By Sally Foughse
Santa Barbara Trust
for Historic Preservation**

Most say that as you get old, you have to give up things. I think you get old because you give up things.

—Senator Theodore Green

Evelyn was ninety-two when I came to know her. As the new accountant for a museum in Fresno, California, I inherited a cadre of volunteers assigned to "office functions."

Evelyn was the queen of these devoted ladies, leaving the rest in the

dust, not only in volunteer years, but life years. Although frail and tiny, she had a feistiness that was legendary. Every Tuesday, without fail, she would steer her ancient Plymouth through the streets of Fresno to the museum

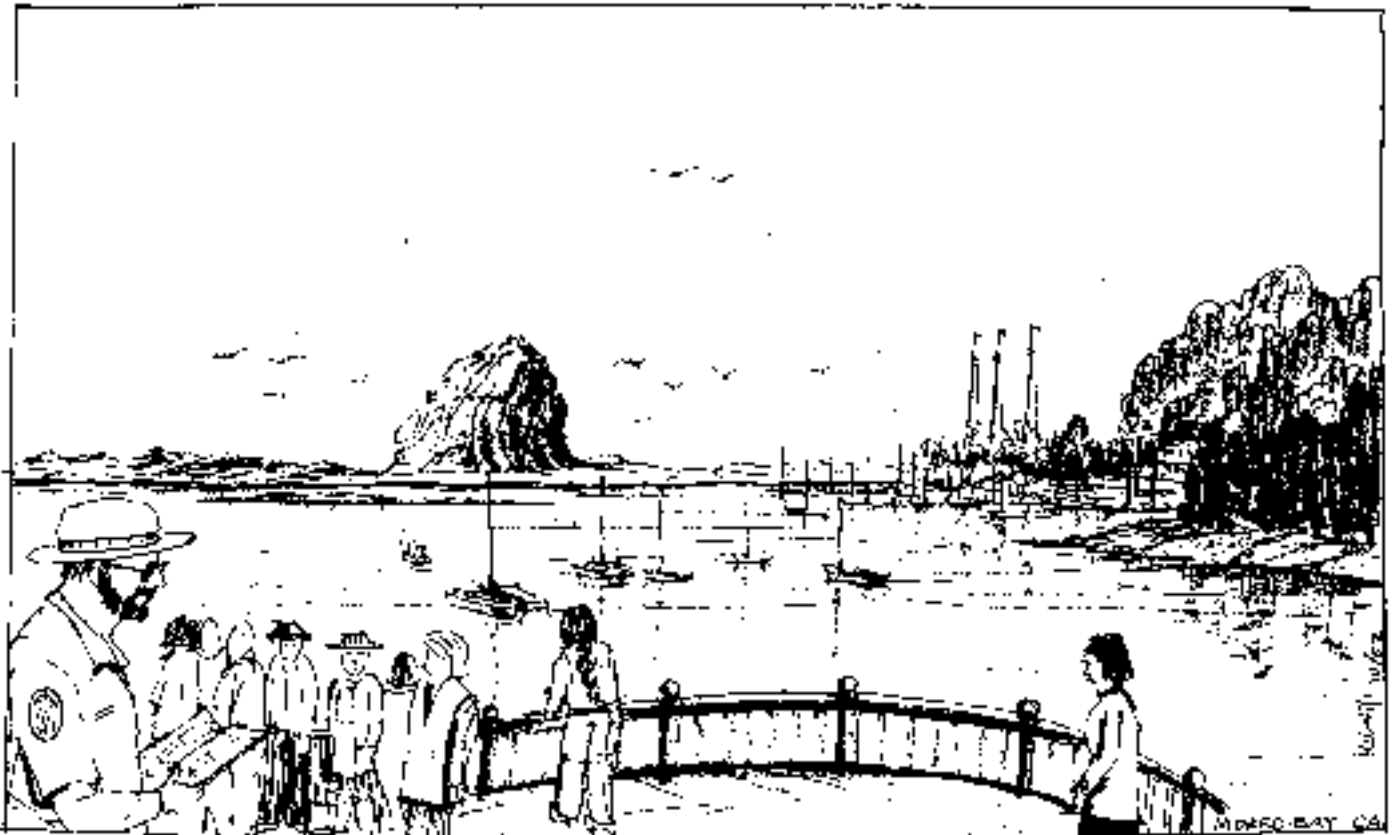
not her forte. She could not operate a calculator, and the numbers on accounting ledger sheets were too small for her to read. She couldn't type on an electric typewriter, let alone a word processor, and her lack of coordination and deteriorating

Each Tuesday afternoon, Evelyn rolled up in that blue wreck of a car, and I'd feel a headache coming on. I began to dread Tuesdays.

for her weekly dose of culture.

I was hard-pressed to find tasks to keep Evelyn busy. Math skills were

eyesight prevented her from putting labels on file folders. Alphabetizing invoices seemed like a good assignment for her, but her concept of the



alphabet varied from the rest of ours. Most any task I assigned was either too difficult or had to be redone by another volunteer.

I'm all business. Museums might be nonprofit enterprises, but they still should be run with an eye toward the bottom line. I saw volunteers as non-human assets, pairs of hands waiting to perform useful work at no cost to the organization. Evelyn taught me how wrong I was.

She was always dressed in her volunteer outfits, ready and waiting, and I let go of my drive for productivity and gave her tasks that made her feel useful and needed.

Before I learned that lesson, her weekly arrival frustrated me. She'd show up for her three hour shift, unable to perform "useful" work, taking up space, chattering constantly with the staff and other volunteers, making extra work for others by not getting her assignment done correctly.

I would give her a box of pennies from the donation box and ask her to wrap them into fifty-cent rolls. Even with a counter, her rolls contained forty-seven, forty-nine, fifty-three, whatever, number of pennies. As she left each Tuesday, I would dump out rolls and save the pennies for the next shift.

"Busy work," I fumed in my office. "What a waste!" Each Tuesday afternoon, Evelyn rolled up in that blue wreck of a car, and I'd feel a headache coming on. I began to dread Tuesdays.

Then one week Evelyn didn't show up for her shift. Oftentimes, volunteers didn't call in to let us know they weren't coming. But when the following Tuesday arrived without Evelyn, someone called her home to check on her.

Evelyn had been in a car accident. It was her fault, and she was okay but still stiff and sore. She lost her driver's license. No one realized what a psychological blow this was to her. She saw the museum as family, like a church almost, a major social outlet in her life. None of us, especially "business me," realized this.

She became depressed, called us frequently to continue the contact, but eventually even the calls dropped off. Finally a few staffers went to her home and were shocked at what they found.

As a tiny person, Evelyn could ill afford to lose the amount of weight she had lost. She had cloistered

herself in her small, modest home. Since she couldn't drive any longer, she rarely got out. Her only child, a daughter, lived in another state. She made a brief visit after the accident but had returned to her home weeks before. Evelyn was fading fast.

That's when the museum folks went into action.

We connected Evelyn to various social services for other assistance. But every Tuesday, without fail, we took turns bringing her over for her volunteer shift. She was always dressed in her volunteer outfits, ready and waiting for the outing, the focus of her life.

I let go of my drive for productivity and gave her tasks that made her feel useful and needed, regardless of their impact on the museum's operation. She thrived as the center of attention.

It was then that I realized volunteers aren't mere cogs in wheels. They're there because they want to be, not have to be. Their sense of belonging and contributing is equally, if not more, important than the actual work that needs to be done.

After Evelyn died at the age of ninety-seven, the museum closed up operations while our staff attended her funeral. She taught us all, and particularly me, that volunteers are the soul of an organization, and the body of an institution is just an empty shell without the soul. Bless every Evelyn! 🐾

MacKerricher State Park

Whale Skeleton Exhibit Enhanced

By Rouvaishyana, State Park
Interpreter Assistant

MacKerricher State Park's exhibit of gray whale and partial humpback whale skeletons sports two recent additions. Park staff and volunteers completed a shelter building in late summer and fall of 2002 to protect the exhibits from deterioration due to weather. Park staff also installed a large interpretive panel on the topic of gray whales in January 2003. Both of these projects had involved extensive planning and months, even years, of work.

The whale skeleton exhibits have been in place since the 1990s, and each year require cleaning and painting to protect them from the effects of weather. Some of the bones have begun to deteriorate and crumble; to extend the life of the exhibits, staff began planning a shelter building several years ago. We went through several stages of design by a skilled woodworker, a draftsman, an architect, and two State Park engineers, chiefly to ensure that the building could withstand severe storm winds. At one point, wood and materials were purchased for construction, only to have the plans change and the materials diverted to another project.



Park staff dug massive footings for the posts.



MacKerricher State Park recently dedicated additions to the whale exhibit during the Ft. Bragg Whale Festival activities.

During winter 2001-2002, Park staff dug massive footings, placed support posts, and worked with a contractor to pour heavy concrete anchors. Park staff and California Department of Forestry fire crews placed the main roof support beams and began adding roof rafters. This work slowed as the busy spring/summer season began. At this critical time, a camp host with many years' experience as a building contractor arrived to complete the roof work. With the shelter complete in early September 2002, several staff members and volunteers converged to move the skeletons into their new home.

Mendocino District was awarded funds from the Volunteer Enhancement Program during fall 2001. One of the projects slated for these funds was design and construction of supplemental exhibit sections. That winter (the same winter that saw work

begin on the whale shelter), park staff and volunteers began planning new exhibit items. We settled on a large interpretive panel to cover aspects of gray whale biology and migration. This also went through several permutations and design changes. Eventually we closed in on a design. A local graphic artist assisted us in finalizing the design and converting it to digital format for the fabricating company. The company completed the panel and shipped it to us early in 2003, at which time MacKerricher staff installed it at the skeleton exhibit site.

MacKerricher State Park held a dedication of these additions to the whale exhibit during the recent Ft. Bragg Whale Festival activities. Chief Ranger Ron Munson delivered a welcoming address, and staff and docents were on hand to answer questions. The park's regular weekly guided whale watch program followed immediately after the dedication. 🐾

Take an Adventure with Our New Brochures!

By Mary A. Helmich
Interpretation and Education
Division

Just in time for spring, the Interpretation and Education Division, along with department field staff and volunteers, have developed four themed "Heritage Adventures." These brochures take an aspect of California's rich history and link it together with interpretive facilities, historical landmarks, and other sites to tell a story. The guides are free and include a tour map, with directions, connecting often little known, but interesting, histories with the sites along the route. The four brochures are:

- California's Wandering Capital;
- Harvesting the Hills: Hydraulic Mining and the Quest for Gold;
- In the Footsteps of the '49ers to the Southern Mines; and
- In the Interest of Time: 350 Years of San Diego History in 35 Miles.

Although developed by California State Parks, the tours are not exclusive to our system and usually include more than one park along the route. The "Adventures" also direct visitors to city and county museums and parks, historical societies, national monuments, forest ranger stations, and California State Historic Landmarks. Mileage is noted for segments of the routes to aid visitors planning a tour.



The idea for the project was born during California's Sesquicentennial period. Among those who have contributed to the development of the four brochures are: Jonathan Williams, Philip Carey, Mary Stokes, Darci Moore, Ken McKowen, John Underwood, Andrew Franklin, Diane Barclay, Anne Marie Tipton, Michael Green, Peggy Ronning and T.K. Komura. Donna Pozzi was instrumental in continuing to support the concept for the project well after many 150th anniversary activities were over.

As the former Sesquicentennial Coordinator for the department, I had the pleasure of facilitating the brochure project and overseeing their production. It is my hope that the numbers of "Heritage Adventures" will grow in future years to meet the increasing demand for heritage tourism.

The brochures are being sent to the field now. If you would like copies of one or all of them at your park, or just the inspiration for developing another "Adventure," please contact me at (916) 653-3913 or mhelm@parks.ca.gov .🐾

Completion Of Phase II On The Horizon

Park Map And Brochure Program

By Pat McLatchey

Interpretive Publications Section

The Interpretive Publications staff is excited to report the substantial progress we've made on the second phase of the Park Map and Brochure Program, which will see the completion of 14 brochures. The following brochures will be in the parks by the end of June: Angel Island SP, Calaveras Big Trees SP, California Citrus SHP, Garrapata SP, Gaviota SP, Jedediah Smith Redwoods SP, Lake Oroville SRA, Marshall Gold Discovery SHP, Russian Gulch, Van Damme & Mendocino Headlands SPs, San Luis Reservoir SRA, Sunset and Manresa SBs, and Torrey Pines SR and SP. Candlestick Point SRA and Colonel Allensworth SHP were the first two off the press and arrived at the parks in early February.

Phase II of this program follows on the heels of the 21 brochures completed last year: Chino Hills SP, El Presidio de Santa Barbara SHP, Folsom Powerhouse SHP, Fremont Peak SP, Indian Grinding Rock SHP, Leo Carrillo SP, Los Osos Oaks SR, MacKerricher SP, McConnell/George J. Hatfield SRAs, Millerton Lake SRA, Mount San Jacinto SP, Old Town San Diego SHP, Pigeon Point Light Station SHP, Richardson Grove SP, San Clemente SB, San Simeon SP, Seacliff and New Brighton SBs, Shasta SHP, Sonoma SHP, California State Capitol Museum, and Tomales Bay SP.

Our goal is to produce a color brochure for each of our park units at no expense to the park, the district or the visitors. We asked district super-



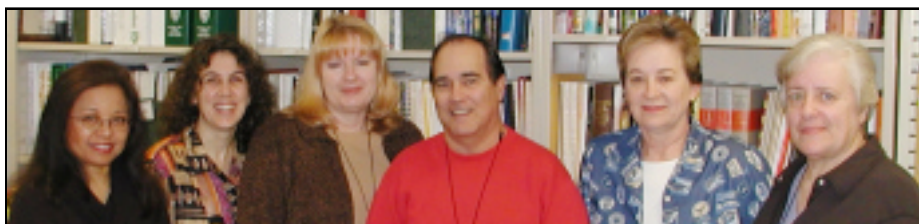
intendents to prioritize their brochure needs and choose three brochures they would like produced over the next three years. For several parks the new brochures represent their first in decades. In some cases it's their first brochure ever!

Laurena Cabañero, Gail Dudding and Ron Warr have assumed the layout and design of the Phase II brochures and completing map work that was previously contracted. Carol Cullens recently completed the interpretive text for 11 of this year's 14 brochures, and Pat McLatchey has been instrumental in the editing and coordination. Working closely with Tom Lindberg - who supervised the unit as the new program was born and has since taken a position with the current Marin District - Sherri Vargas provides invaluable support. Jenan Saunders recently joined the unit and is looking forward to assisting us in

continuing this worthwhile project. Many of you have worked with us by phone and email— now you can connect our voices to each of us in the photo.

Additional good news is that the Interpretive Publications Section received the necessary funding to continue with phase III of this crucial program. Phase III will provide 21 new brochures for Bidwell-Sacramento River SP, Half Moon Bay SB, Turlock Lake SRA, Monterey Area Beaches (North), California Mining & Mineral Museum, William R. Hearst Memorial SB, Antelope Valley Indian Museum, Carpinteria SB, Picacho SRA, California State Railroad Museum, Mt. Tamalpais SP, Humboldt Redwoods SP, Sonoma Coast SB, Bodie SHP, Columbia SHP, Santa Cruz Mission SHP, Silverwood Lake SRA, Crystal Cove SP, Border Field SP, Will Rogers SHP and a yet to be determined park in the current Silverado District.

Please visit www.parks.ca.gov to see the new publications. Choose "Find a Park" and then the link to the brochure. The brochures are in PDF format and can easily be printed from home. If you have any questions about the program or need assistance online or with obtaining a particular brochure, please call Jonathan Williams or Jenan Saunders. 🐾



Laurena Cabañero, Jenan Saunders, Gail Dudding, Ron Warr, Pat McLatchey, and Carol Cullens.

Online Technology Puts Park Programs Directly Into Classrooms

Live video images of 4,000 elephant seals flashed across the screen at the Borrego Springs Middle school library as an audience of young science students watched a state park educational program about the seal's mating and breeding activities.

The live video feed was transmitted direct to the Borrego Springs School library from the Año Nuevo State Reserve, the largest breeding colony in the world for the northern elephant seal. Located 25 miles south of San Francisco, the 4,000-acre seaside park has become widely known for interpretive programs explaining the elephant seal's mating behavior and winter breeding season from December through March.

Middle school students in Sally Theriault's science class were among the first in the state to see a live interpretive presentation about the seals by Año Nuevo ranger Kevin Williams.

The online video feed from site to classroom is the latest technological innovation sponsored by the California State Parks in partnership with the state Department of Education and the county Offices of Education.

Mark Jorgensen, superintendent of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, said the pilot program uses high-speed Internet access to feed educational programming to the schools. The science class at Borrego Springs Middle School is one of four schools in California initially involved in the pilot program.



Students will prepare reports and teach each other about "their park."

Similar programs also are being developed at schools in Marin, Sacramento and Orange counties. Eventually, live state-park video programming will reach all California K-12 public schools through the Digital California Project (DCP), according to Joe von Herrmann, an Interpreter II who is in charge of the state parks "distance interpretation" or "distance learning" effort.

Von Herrmann said one of the key components of the program, called Building Bridges, allows two classrooms from different areas of the state to study a state park near them. A park interpreter works with the teacher throughout the school year to address academic content standards and park themes, von Herrmann said. Joanie Cahill has been assigned as the interpreter for Borrego Springs Middle School.

Using digital photos, digital video, presentation software and other tools, students will prepare reports on "their park." The classrooms then will videoconference via the Digital California Project and teach each other about "their park." 🐾



These students were among the first in the state to see a "live" interpretive presentation about elephant seals by Año Nuevo ranger Kevin Williams.

The Mystery of the Unidentified Track

By Karen Westcamp-Johnson
Petit Jean State Park, Arkansas

As interpreters, we are all faced with mysteries. Visitors to our sites are always asking new questions, wanting answers to common mysteries, or ones we have never dreamed of investigating before. Oftentimes those questions are redundant and might be as simple as "how long has this site been a state park," or "how old are the rocks?" However, more often the questions go along with the following scenario.

Guest Jane Doe (outfitted in the traditional tourist straw hat, binoculars gracing the neck, T-shirt proclaiming that her grandkids visited Washington D.C. and all she got was the shirt, new hiking boots complementing the feet) enters the Visitor's Center and approaches the front desk. Her husband is in tow, dressed similarly in straw hat, khaki shorts, and an atrocious Hawaiian print shirt. Desk Clerk Debbie greets them with her usual friendliness, "Good afternoon. How can I help you?"

"Is there someone here who can tell me about birds?" Guest Jane Doe asks, looking around hopefully.

Desk Clerk Debbie points automatically to me and says, "Karen, our Nature Lady, can help you." And I oblige, as always.

"My husband and I were hiking and we saw a bird ... can you tell us what it was?" Guest Jane Doe queries of me.

I hide a smile at the nondescript question. "What did the bird look like?"

"Well, it was kind of a gray color, about the size of a robin."

"No. It was brown, and smaller like a chickadee," her husband, Guest John Doe, chimes in.

And the investigation has begun, with no clues to lead me anywhere. But by golly, we'll find out what bird that was!

At countless times in our interpretive careers we all get questions like that—guests wanting to know what flower, tree, or bird they saw without giving us any detailed informa-

tion on which to base an answer. But my trusty identification guides always do the trick. Let them use their own observations and experiences to deduce what they saw. Isn't that the base of interpretation, to stimulate the visitor to find the answers on their own? Yes. My trusty field guides have always worked. Until this last summer.

It was an average hot summer day, humid and stifling outside. I had just finished my morning hike and demonstration, my uniform graced with the sweat of the morning. I had stopped by the Visitor's Center on my way home for lunch when the following scenario occurred.

Local Resident John Q entered the building. Desk Clerk Debbie called out a greeting, "Good afternoon!"

Local Resident John Q approached the desk and asked, "Is there anyone here who knows about animals?"

"Our Nature Lady, Karen, does," Desk Clerk Debbie replied.

"How can I help you?" I asked, always eager to help, even when dripping sweat.

"Well ... there is a track in the dirt in my driveway, and I have never seen anything like it before."

Ah. A mystery. "What did it look like?" I asked, somewhat intrigued. In my four years of work at Petit Jean, no one had ever asked me about an animal track before.

"It was at least as wide as my hand. It looked like something was dragging the ground or slithering

across it. If I didn't know better, I'd say it was a python or an anaconda," Local Resident John Q explained.

Now I was very intrigued. A mystery indeed!

"How long was it?"

"It went all the way across my driveway, like it was slithering across the ground. And on each side of the slither were these little half moons in the dirt."

Half moons?

"I was wondering if there was someone who could come take a look at it for me," Local Resident John Q hinted.

The hint taken, I followed him to his driveway just behind our camping grounds. Once there, I climbed out of the park van and carefully approached the mystery track site. The unidentified track was just as he had described ... an impression in the soft dirt about the width of his hand dragging all the way across the driveway. On either side were small half moon-shaped impressions that

suddenly reminded me of the imprint little legs would leave as they push themselves forward across the ground. My mind flew to work, trying to think of what animal would be so close to the ground that its belly dragged, probably with little legs pushing it along.

Hmmm.

And suddenly it hit me ... a box turtle! I deduced that a turtle's shell would more than likely sit close enough to the ground that when it walked in the soft dirt, the plastron, or bottom of the shell, would drag. Local Resident John Q wasn't overly convinced when I gave him my initial hypothesis. So I promised him a thorough investigation.

I opted for a comparison experiment. I found a box turtle after lunch and transported her to a spot in the park where the dirt was soft and pliable, similar to Local Resident John Q's driveway. Then the turtle was placed on the ground and I waited. It was a hot day, the sun beating down on the turtle's shell, so she quickly opted to maneuver across the dirt toward the shade of nearby trees. The impression she left in the dirt was almost identical to the unidentified track in Local Resident John Q's driveway! My hypothesis was correct. I quickly returned to my office and gave him a telephone call reporting my findings. I think he was just happy to know that a rogue python or anaconda wasn't hiding out in his yard.

Yes. We are all faced with interpretive mysteries to solve. A biologist at heart, a biologist by training, any type of science mystery gets my juices flowing. Especially when scientific experiments back my hypothesis. The mystery of the unidentified track just needed an interpreter to close the case!

Slow Down! We Move Too Fast

by Karen I. Shragg

In 1967, Simon and Garfunkel told us to slow down in the famous lyrics to their "59th Street Bridge Song." If we moved too fast 35 years ago, what can we say of our lives today? We live in a fast paced, fast-food world where waiting one minute for a computer to spit out its data is considered to be slow. I know of a three-year old child who tried to order french fries when her mother rolled up to make a bank deposit, leaving her mother to reflect on how fast-food restaurants were a part of their daily routine.

Gridlocked traffic of in a hurry commuters provides a breeding ground for road rage and stress related illnesses. Look up in any business phone book under the word, "Fast", "Speedy" or "Rapid" and you will find dozens of entries; Fast Printing, Fast Signs, Fast Frames, and Fast Photo services, the list goes on and on. Now try looking up a business with "Slow" in its first name and you will come up empty handed. We've all been asked at one time or another, "How long does it take to do that trail?" It's a question that reveals how pressed for time we are in a culture that places such a high premium on rapidly delivered goods and services.

I know of at least one organization that professes to be slow and to be proud of it. A group of people have tried to slow the world down by starting the "Slow Food Movement." This movement starting simmering in the 1980s in Italy. Slow dining is an

integral part of Italy's age-old culture and this movement has made its way slowly but surely across the Atlantic. With over 60,000 members worldwide, the Slow-Food folks focus on striking a balance with nature, by slowing down to enjoy well prepared and nutritious food. It is the antithesis to the fast-food movement which focuses on quickly prepared and quickly eaten food. Slow fooders are self-defined "eco-gastronomes," believing that the pleasure of eating is connected to the equilibrium that is preserved or revived in the environment which provides the food. They are activists trying to change the world one Pasta Primavera at a time. They even give out a Slow Food Award for the Defense of Biodiversity (see: www.Slowfood.com).

Striving to be healthy in modern day society seems to present more challenges than ever before. To be out of balance and stressed promotes disease and all of its subsequent costs to society. We put others in danger of decisions made while under stress. To be in balance one must reduce stress, and to reduce stress experts point to the need to slow down.

Nature centers, national parks, and other open spaces offer balance to the ever quickening pace of life in this new century. They provide a place where slowing down is rewarded with better vistas of landscapes and greater chances of having wildlife encounters. Many of those surveyed to see how they were coping with the news of September 11, 2001, said that they turned to nature to be reminded of the beauty that is still in the world. Calming down a society in times that are overwhelmed with news of terrorism and warfare is a key value, not something to be dismissed as fluff or as low on the funding priority list. Perhaps connecting more directly with the Slow Food Movement and its pride of helping the world to slow down is a way to promote our institutions.

As funding for parks and nature centers is threatened by tighter budgets and reordering of spending priorities, it is important to remind our respective agencies that promoting wellness to our constituents is far from being an extra. It is an essential part of the quality of life in our

communities. The benefits of well maintained and interpreted sites far exceeds the individual experience

of the person who has taken the time to slow down and experience a natural setting. 🐾



Slicing and Dicing California History

California's complex human history is the product of people who, through their individual knowledge, tools and social constructs, have acted and reacted to the environments around them. In a way, California history is the sum of countless human and natural events, stretching over more than ten thousand years. How can these vast, interlocking strands be collected, examined, illuminated, and meaningfully interpreted for the enjoyment and enlightenment of present and future generations?

Recently a five-person task force, chaired by department Historian/Interpreter Mary Helmich, proposed "slicing" California history from a different, more inclusive angle. Their proposed framework aggregates California history into six broad, core concepts:

- California People
- People and the Environment
- Developing Economies
- Governing California
- Social and Community Life
- Expressing Intellectual and Cultural Life

This way of looking at our history should enable department staff to put a more human face on history, while creating interpretive materials and programs that are more meaningful for the nonspecialist interests of the visiting public. Additionally, the concepts should help program planners and analysts understand how well or completely the State Park System has covered California history. This, in turn, may show weaknesses or gaps that need to be filled through the acquisition of new sites or artifacts or the creation of new or revision of existing programs and facilities.

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In the past, "history" has been subdivided into certain, seemingly mutually exclusive, topic areas or chronological frameworks — political history, military history, the Spanish Period, the World War II Era, etc. While this simplification and focus may be suitable for in-depth academic study, it often lacks the cross-cultural and cross-temporal elements that would bring history alive for the general public. The draft State Park System Plan identified the need to represent California's rich history, while reaching out to its 85 million annual visitors with a new, more relevant and meaningful approach.

Each of these concepts is further defined or "diced" into a number of subordinate ideas. "Governing California," for instance, is represented through the following sub-concepts:

- Control and Defense
- Law and Civic Order
- Government Institutions
- Politics and Political Processes.

The conceptual framework for California history, this new angle of examination, is being reviewed by a range of interested individuals and organizations to ensure it is comprehensive. It is hoped that many of those in the field outside of California State Parks will join the department in using this new approach to understanding our past. 🐾



Attending a National Interpreters Workshop

If you have ever thought about attending the National Interpreters Workshop (NIW) but didn't go, this article is for you. We'll answer many of the common questions about these workshops and hopefully offer a few practical tips to help you get there.

The NIW is absolutely the best interpretive training available anywhere, and the opportunity to network with over a thousand fellow interpreters can be just as valuable. But no one is going to just hand you the opportunity to attend. You will have to work for it.

This year the workshop will be in Reno / Sparks, Nevada. It is closer to us this year than it will be for the next several years. But being across the state line poses some special challenges for a state employee who wants to attend the training.

The first question that comes to many interpreters is why is it so expensive, why does it have to be at such a fancy hotel? The answer lies in the numbers. The logistics for bringing together this many people limit us to larger facilities that can comfortably accommodate a thousand people. But costs ARE important. So among those facilities that can accommodate our group, NAI selects one that will offer competitive room prices within government per diem rates. But don't let that stop you, there are always lots of interpreters that stay at budget accommodations near the workshop.



The Nugget Hotel in Sparks Nevada will host this year's National Interpreter's Workshop.

The registration fee can also cause a little sticker shock: this year early registration is \$315. But there's a lot packed into that basic registration fee. Many meals are included, but that is not always obvious when you sign up. There are full, long days of training capped off with evening special events. The workshop team knows that price is important to you, and they work hard to keep it reasonable. Once you get past the price and jump into the workshop, we are confident you will see a good value for your money.

So what do you need to do if you want to go? For starters, remember it is a workshop, not conference (state employees need special approval to attend a conference). The first step is to submit an "Out of State Travel Request" (DPR791). These are due in headquarters April 18, so start early

to allow time for it to work up through your chain of command. A lot of people are convinced their request will never be approved so they do not submit one. This may be a mistake - it is a simple little one page form, so try it (but then again don't expect any miracles)!

Some folks grumble about the cumbersome nature of the approval process. But this is not something our department created. It applies to all state agencies. We need to justify the importance of the out-of-state travel, and dollars will be very limited. But we have good justification.

**National
Interpreters
Workshop
November 11-15, 2003**

I usually put something like this on my DPR791:

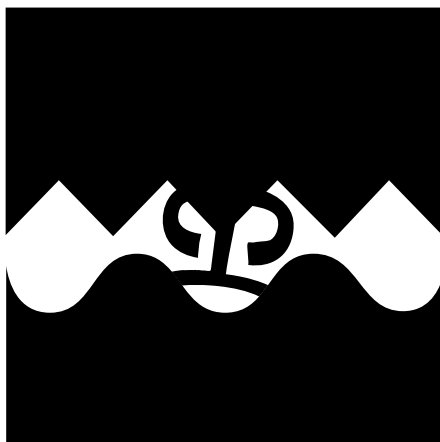
"This trip will permit me to attend the National Interpreter's Workshop. This is an opportunity to meet with over a thousand of the nation's best interpreters and attend the finest interpretive training available anywhere. There is no better way to keep current in this fast-moving field.

This workshop allows me to follow the latest trends in exhibit fabrication and audiovisual development and to share ideas with colleagues from across the country. Sessions will focus on techniques of program management, empirical research, practical field experiences and interpretive philosophy.

It is critical that California State Parks be represented at this workshop if we are to maintain our status as leaders in interpretation."

For state employees, that DPR791 is your first step. Get busy and get one submitted. But let's face it, taxpayers can be rather critical of paying bureaucrats to travel around the country. So to answer to the constituents, state government places severe limitations on out of state travel. Approval comes all the way

reno.tahoe
NIW 2003



SPARKS
your imagination

travel requests approved. And I'm here to tell you Bucky, this is not a good year! The memo to superintendents clearly states "Due to limited funds, any non-essential or non-required trips such as seminars, conferences, or training will not be considered."

This year the workshop will be in Reno / Sparks, Nevada. It is closer to us this year than it will be for the next several years.

from the top, the Governor's office. And there simply won't be a lot of out of state travel approved. In a good year we might get two interpreter's

But wait, don't give up yet. There is another way to use that form. You can do a request for "time only" and not request travel

expenses. This authorizes you to travel on work time instead of leave time, which is a good start.

Once you get your time paid, you can look into a CSPRA scholarship to assist with your travel expenses. Park cooperating associations also provide a lot of grants to interpreters every year to help them attend. Don't be afraid to ask, remember we have a good reason to go. Be sure to include on your DPR791 how the trip will be paid for, that is, at your own expense, paid by Foundation, donation or whatever.

Also look at creative ways to bring down your travel costs. NAI offers a roommate referral service. Usually you are allowed to pack up to four people in the same room at the conference rate. Or shop around for a budget motel or campground nearby. Carpool with a friend and split the gas. Eat all of the free food provided with workshop registration and you won't need to buy that many meals out.

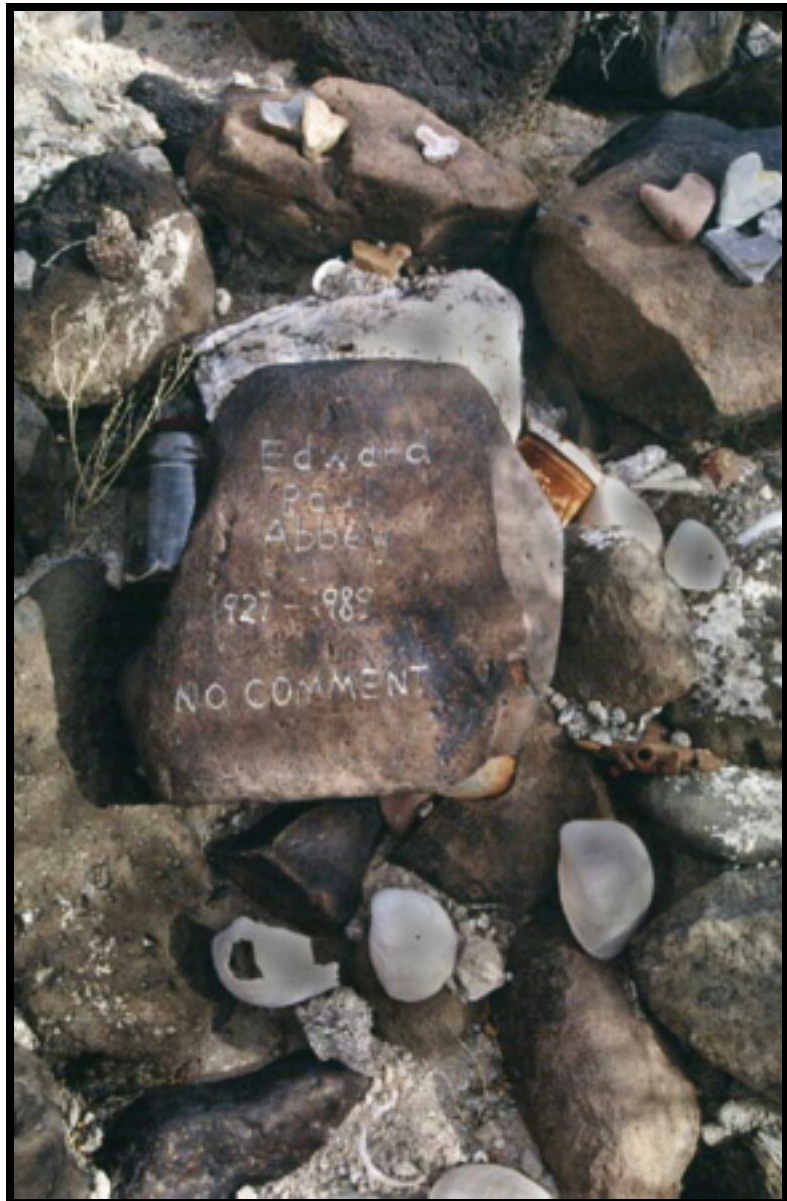
Get creative. You won't be alone. There will be lots of interpreters there on limited budgets. But they make it every year and you can, too.

In the next issue of Catalyst we will de-mystify the workshop registration form and do everything else we can to get as many of you to the workshop as possible. Don't miss it! 🐾

A Timely Reminder

“Do not burn yourselves out. Be as I am — a reluctant enthusiast, a part-time crusader, a half-hearted fanatic. Save the other half of yourselves and your lives for pleasure and adventure. It is not enough to fight for natural land and the west; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it’s still there. ... Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this much: I promise you this one sweet victory over our enemies, over those deskbound men with their hearts in a safe deposit box and their eyes hypnotized by desk calculators. I promise you this: you will outlive the bastards.”

— Edward Abbey



Lighthouses

By Ted Cable,
Kansas State University

Lighthouse. n. : a tower or other structure located at some place dangerous or important with a powerful light that gives a signal for guiding travelers.

Explorers and settlers referred to the Great Plains as an ocean — a sea of grass. The wide horizons and treeless expanses were as daunting to these travelers as the Atlantic Ocean was to those who had crossed it in earlier journeys. Settlers hesitated at the wooded shores of the forested regions before mustering the courage to set off across this ocean in their oxen-driven vessels. Some attached sails to their wagons and literally, tried to sail across these seas.

Millions of travelers still sail among our wind-swept waves of grass and grain. Sailors in air-conditioned cars speed through unfamiliar spaces. Some travel aimlessly, oblivious to the environment around them. Some sail through our seas on maiden voyages; others have sailed these seas for years. Many of these visitors wash up on our shores, some by accident. Others, keen explorers longing to see new places, arrive by design.

To sailors everywhere, especially those sailing in strange seas, lighthouses are beacons of comfort and security, guidance and hope. Everyday people wash up on your shores regardless of where you are. That is why it is so wonderful that lighthouses exist. Lighthouses, such as



Interpreters see to it that their lighthouses effectively illuminate their surroundings.

nature centers, zoos, museums, and historic sites guide people through sandy pine forests, limestone glades, estuaries, reservoirs, cypress swamps, dry rocky steppe, and those oceans of grass called prairies. Interpretive centers light their surroundings and guide wandering people through unfamiliar places.

Interpreters are lighthouse keepers. They care for places that provide a sense of security, a sense of place, and a sense of belonging. Interpreters see to it that their lighthouses effectively illuminate their surroundings.

Since the 19th century, lighthouses have had what are known as Fresnel lenses. These lenses increase the power of the light and focus it in one direction. According to a recent PBS documentary, a Fresnel lens is "an elaborate orchestration of an array of lenses and dozens of prisms. Each piece is molded, polished, and set precisely to redirect diffuse lamp light into a unified far-reaching beam." Is that not what nature centers and other interpretive facilities seek to accomplish? Are not the best interpretive sites an elaborate orchestration of media and individuals molded, polished, and set precisely to direct unified far-reaching beacons of information and inspiration?

Individually each interpreter at an interpretive site is a single lens contributing to a beam of light that is far-reaching and focused. Each interpreter works with other lenses to project unified interpretive themes deep into the hearts and minds of people passing by.

We are all wayfarers on our own personal journeys. In light of that, I will extend this metaphor to say that each interpreter can be a lighthouse. To people in unfamiliar seas, seeking unknown destinations, and trying to navigate the rocky coasts in their lives, individual interpreters can personally provide comfort, security, and guidance. In times of trouble interpreters — like lighthouses — provide beacons of joy and hope to passersby. Each day it is our responsibility, privilege, and pleasure to light our worlds. 🐾

The Road Less Traveled

Something New to Check Out

By J. Mendez - Guide 1

What is it that can be found in most state parks, allows users to remove things from it, is an interpreter's treasure chest, and is free?

Need a hint? Internet users like to think it is obsolete and most cities have one. Nothing at all rings a bell? Give up? It's a library, but I'd guess that you already knew the answer. What you probably didn't know was that many state parks have quite extensive libraries.

You might also be surprised to discover that your local Marion the librarian has really let her (his) hair down and does a lot more these days than just check out books! Michelle Hachigian—our guest columnist—is a good example. Since joining the guide staff at Hearst Castle® in 1996 she has—in addition to her duties as guide and librarian — been part of the guide training and oral history programs, a member of the tour manual committee, written articles for various in-house publications, and been a panel presenter for the 2002 California Council for the Promotion of History's (CCPH) annual conference.

Now tongue-tied Hearst Castle® guides are forever in her debt because her latest project — *Remembering San Simeon* — gives them plenty to say when they've finally lined up that hot date! (See *It's Friday Night and I've got nothing to do...* in the fall issue.)

Never at a Loss for Words (An Easy-to-Use Interpretive Tool)

by Michelle Hachigian-Guide 1

Around March of 2001, after musing for years with my colleagues at Hearst Castle®, we concluded that the time had come to put together an interpretive tool for guides who daily tell about the life and times of William Randolph Hearst and Hearst Castle®. Thus was born the 215-page compilation - *Remembering San Simeon* - which comprises over 170 accounts by some 150 individuals, excerpted from dozens of oral history interview transcripts, autobiographies, biogra-

The goal was to have in one place, instead of hundreds of scattered accounts and formats, a sampling of stories and associates, as well as the principal characters (architect Julia Morgan, Hearst's companion/hostess Marion Davies, and W. R. Hearst himself).

In this way, *Remembering San Simeon*, would provide a "one stop" resource for great stories and quotes to enrich the tours that guides give to some 800,000 visitors annually. The material is indexed and each alphabeti-

The goal was to have a "one stop" resource for great stories and quotes to enrich the tours that guides give to some 800,000 visitors annually.

phies, and monument correspondence with San Simeon guests and employees. (All materials utilized in the project are housed in the monument's staff library for employee use.)

As the originator/author of the project, I tried to select the most relevant and representative excerpts (with help from fellow guide Sandra Heinemann) — a "best of" compilation — one that would offer a broad palette of the time and place: W. R. Hearst's luxurious country estate during the first half of the 20th century, through the memories of those who experienced it firsthand.

cal entry (by person's name) includes citations, making it convenient to find or fact-check a particular story with its source. Of course, these are excerpts, and guides are encouraged to visit the Hearst Castle® Staff Library for the complete content and context of any account.

Working during my once-a-week librarian hours over the course of approximately 18 months, I typed up the excerpts and researched biographical information to include with each person's entry. The experience was educational and fun for me, as I hope reading it will be for all of my colleagues at Hearst Castle.® 🐾

California's Tapestry

A Section of *The Catalyst*

Office of Community Involvement

Issue #16 - Spring/03

A New Book on Race in America

Race is a difficult subject for Americans and maybe even more so for Parks people. Oh, we can discuss or tell the story of Blacks or early Californians with little hesitation. Likewise, a discussion about the need to have a more diverse visitor base during a visitor center planning meeting is easy enough. But, when it comes to topics like environmental racism and the distribution of resources it becomes more difficult.

Is it because the data is clear that there is a need for change, that some of the values we hold so dear are barriers to many people? Last year several papers on the lack of access and visitation to National Parks by people of color as an environmental justice issue were published. Later in the year, a study on the distribution of Los Angeles County's local park proposition funds showed that much of it did not end up in the inner city minority neighborhoods as was originally promoted. A few years ago, the results of a U.S. Forest Service telephone survey indicated that visitors felt unwelcome and discriminated against at outdoor recreation facilities.

To help us deal with such a changing and sensitive topic, we need to be aware of the most current thoughts on this topic. A new book, "Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground, New Dimensions on Race in America," 2002 W. W. Norton & Company (ISBN 0-393-32351-X), may help in this regard. The authors are Angela Glover Blackwell, Stewart Kwoh and Manuel Pastor, all from California and accomplished leaders in the field of race relations. The American Assembly of Columbia University commissioned this volume as part of its "Uniting America" series.

Here are some "Dimensions" on race from the book with along with my comments on how they can be applied in Parks.

"Black and White" paradigm versus multiculturalism – There is more than one minority group yet we structure our understanding of race in the black-white experience. We need to work towards a multicultural approach rather than working with one group at a time.

Diversity versus Racial and Social Justice – It is more than an

issue of skin tones of employees and visitors. Are the benefits of parks reaching everyone?

Universal versus Particular Strategies – Do we develop programs for specific schools and communities or try to serve all schools and communities to the same degree?

National versus Local Responsibility – For an example in the preservation field, how do we shape National or State policies with regard to multicultural site preservation and then take action locally?

Structural Factors versus Individual Initiative – Just because some people of color succeed in getting employment, access to parks, or receiving their full benefits, that does not mean the system works. Structural factors must be examined to see how they can be improved. That means recruitment or theme changes to tried and true interpretive programs is not enough. The whole visitor program from sites to activities may need changes.

Through the work of our park people we have the ability to establish a lot of a lot of common ground that is uncommon in California. That is why we have to take on the difficult task of understanding race, multiculturalism, diversity, justice and more. 🐾

Submit articles and comments to: Jack K. Shu, Park Superintendent, OCI-Southern California, c/o Southern Service Center, 8885 Rio San Diego Drive, San Diego 92108, Ph# (619) 220-5330.

Catalyst Spring 2003 Contents

From the Editor	Page 3
Interpreters' Resources	Page 4
Dear Master Interpreter	Page 5
Bless Every Evelyn!	Page 6
Whale Skeleton Exhibit Enhanced	Page 8
Take an Adventure With Our New Brochures!	Page 9
Park Map And Brochure Program	Page 10
Technology Puts Park Programs Into Classrooms	Page 11
The Mystery of the Unidentified Track	Page 12
Slow Down! We Move Too Fast	Page 14
Slicing and Dicing California History	Page 15
Dummy's Guide to Attending a NIW	Page 16
A Timely Reminder	Page 18
Lighthouses	Page 19
The Road Less Traveled	Page 20
California's Tapestry	Page 21



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